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RAM SINGH DEL. MAYO SCHOOL OF ART LAHORE

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W. GRIGGS,
HANOVER STREET, PECKHAM,
LONDON, S.E.

The Journal of Indian Art and Industry.

WOOD-CARVING IN SOUTHERN INDIA.

By EDGAR THURSTON, Esq.

For the following excellent account of sandal and other wood carving in the Mysore Province I am greatly indebted to Mr. J. E. A. D'Cruz of the Mysore Public Works Department:—

Mysore includes in its rich and varied flora the sandal (*Santalum album:* sriganda) and the teak (*Tectona grandis*) trees. Their importance and value were early recognised, and, in the first arrangements for the conservancy of forests, these woods were reserved, and any wood, except teak and sandal, was allowed to be felled on payment of a small seigniorage. Sandal has been for a long time a State monopoly, and has yielded the largest portion of the forest revenue. The girth of a mature tree varies from 18 to 36 inches, or sometimes attains 40 inches. The tree takes many years to mature. In its colour and marking, which depend greatly on its age and locale, four varieties of the wood are recognised:—bili (white), kempu (red), nága (cobra), and navilu (peacock). The two latter are the best, and realise the highest prices. The best heart-wood is used for carving, and the roots (said to be richest in oil), with the chips and shavings, find their way to Bombay, China, France, Germany, and America. The oil forms the basis of many scents, and is also used medicinally. The wood is highly scented, close-grained and tough, and, from the fineness and evenness of its structure, is capable of the most delicate carving.

The art of sandal-wood carving is confined to a few families, belonging to the Gudigar caste, in the Sorab and Ságar taluks of the Shimoga district in the north-west corner of the province. There are two or three families in Ságar, and about six in Sorab, which contribute in all about thirty-five artisans at present employed in the craft. The art is also practised by their relations, who found a domicile in Hanavar, Kumpta, Sirsi, Siddapúr, Biligi, and Banavási in the North Canara district. But the work of the latter is said to be by no means so fine as that executed by the artisans of Sorab and Ságar. The artisans of North Canara, however, excel in pith-work (an allied art) of the most exquisite beauty. They usually make *basingas*—special forehead ornaments, richly inlaid with pearls, and worn by men and women on the occasion of marriage.

The Gudigars are reported to have come originally from Goa, their migration to the towns named above having been occasioned by the attempts of the early Portuguese invaders to convert them forcibly to Christianity. The fact that their original language is Konkani corroborates their reputed Konkanese origin.

They say that the derivation of the term Gudigara is from *gudi*, a temple, and that they were so called because they were employed in their own country as carvers and painters in the ornamentation of temples. Another possible derivation of the word is from the Sanscrit *kuttaka* (a carver). They assure us that their fellow castemen are still employed in turning, painting, and other decorative arts at Goa. The Gudigars, in common with the Chitrakaras (ornamenters or decorative artists), claim to be Kshatriyas, and tradition has it that they adopted the profession of carvers, car-builders, or Gudigars "to escape the wrath of Parasu Ráma in the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, who vowed to destroy all Kshatriyas.". It may be that, as a once dominant and opulent class they took to the fine arts as a pastime, and, when times changed, adopted them as a means of livelihood. The sandal-wood carvers are also expert in carving ivory. As the Hindu caste system is connected with the profession followed, it seems possible that the Gudigars of Mysore may be distantly connected with the Kondikars or ivory-carvers of Bengal—Rungapúr and Múrshidábád.

The tools employed by the artisans are primitive, and, although of many shapes and sizes, may be classified as follows:—(1) The saw, from the ordinary hand-saw for cutting the log into planks, to a very fine hand fret-saw employed for cutting the teeth of combs. The fret bow-saw, which forms a part of the equipment of carvers generally, is not used. (2) The plane, ordinarily manufactured by the village artisan, for smoothening the surface of the plank to be operated upon, and for planing cornices or mouldings. (3) The mallet: a slip of wood about 9 in. by 1 in. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (4) The hone: a rough slab of fine-grained, hard stone, with one face rubbed down, for sharpening tools. (5) The chisel, which is of various forms, viz.: the firmer, a flat instrument, square, curved, or skew-edged, the last for working in sharp corners; the gouge, or hollow chisel of varying size and curvature of edge; and the engraver. The sizes of the chisels vary from $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to a width scarcely greater than that of the point of a steel nib. The tools are made from European umbrella spokes, ramrods, and country steel.

As he squats on the ground in characteristic Indian fashion, the carver wants neither table hold-fasts, hand screws, nor dogs. He holds down the piece he is carving with one hand, while he carves with the other. At

times, if need be, he thinks nothing of enlisting the aid of his toes, to supplement his hands in holding the piece which he is engaged on. He generally places it on a tripod about 1½ ft. square and a foot from the ground, so as to have it sufficiently near his eye, and turns it round in any direction he requires for the convenient use of his tool. Having selected his wood, the carver cuts it into slabs or planks of the size and thickness required, which he proceeds to plane and join together, and so construct his cabinet, *mandasana*, glove-box, or whatever article he is about to execute. Having finished the planing and joining work, he takes the parts to pieces, and proceeds to inscribe the design or pattern on the wood with an engraver, outlining the design in all its details. The next process is "bosting," or cutting away roughly between the outlines of the pattern, by which means he gets a rough model of the subject, which he proceeds to finish. He starts with a large tool, and goes over the work several times with tools of finer and finer edges, till he perfects his work in every detail of shape and curve, and gradually gives it the light and shade, the bold relief and deep under-cutting, which give his work the beauty and finish for which it is celebrated. The minute details and characteristic fineness of the work are effected by the smallest veiners and eye-tools, of which the artisan has a great number and variety. A peculiarity of the sandal-wood carver of Mysore is that he disdains to use a file, and does the cleanest and most finished work with the chisel alone, aided by the fine texture of the wood and the extreme sharpness of his tools. Owing to the constant strain which the fine lace-like work he is employed on imposes on his eyes, the eyesight of the Gudigar is known to fail in early life.

The only flaw, readily discernible in the beautiful work turned out by the Gudigars, is their inferior and clumsy joining work, which is, however, beside their art, and belongs more to the domain of the cabinet-maker. It is also noticeable that, in cabinets most richly carved, drawer-knobs are of the plainest and roughest description, resembling those of an inferior bazár-made article.

The early improvement in the art of sandal-wood carving in Mysore, which far excels the art as practised in the adjoining towns of North Canara by the same caste, may be attributed—(1) To the abundance of sandal-wood at Sorab and Ságar, as an artisan, who constantly works on it, cannot but soon become aware of the possibilities of a wood of its characteristic texture for elaborate and delicate carving; (2) To the patronage of the early Mysore chieftains or Poligars; (3) To the object lessons in design, afforded by the beautiful and elaborate stone-carvings in the neighbouring temples of Halebid and Belgavi.

For the last century, however, the art may be said to have remained *in statu quo*. The stagnation may be accounted for by the following facts:—(1) That to master its technicalities is slow and tedious work; (2) That an inborn artistic taste is necessary for success in the art; (3) That the art is not taught, but acquired by patient observation and imitation on the part of the novice, while there has been no effort or pretence on the part of the master craftsman to teach the art even to his own children; (4) That the oriental conservatism of a caste or trade guild tends to the strict reservation of trade secrets within the limits of the guild. Some or all of these causes have tended to centralise the art, and make it the exclusive property of the few who practise it at the present day.

The stimulus which the art receives from time to time at the present day is from orders from the Government, corporate public bodies, or Máharájas, for address boxes, cabinets, and other articles, specially ordered for presentation, or for the various fine art exhibitions, for which high prices are paid. But it is believed that, although the encouragement thus offered tends to increased excellence in the technique of the art, it has no effect in spreading a knowledge of it, or in calling more craftsmen into existence, as the orders are rarely so large as to be beyond the producing capabilities of the few who are at present engaged in the craft. In conversation with the workmen imported from Sorab and Ságar for work in the palace now being built for H.H. the Máháraja of Mysore, which affords an admirable object lesson for those interested in the question of technical education, it was elicited that there are several Gudigars who, from the want of a due taste for the art, never acquire it, but are employed in carpentry and turning. Others, having acquired lands, are engaged in cultivation and fast losing all touch with the art.

Viewed as an industry, sandal-wood carving is certainly insignificant. The articles ordinarily manufactured for the native market are combs, toilet paint-boxes, jewel boxes, small images, shrines or *mantapas*, toys (horses, camels, elephants, lions, deer, &c.), chess-men, fans, and walking-sticks. The articles turned out for Europeans are card-cases, pencil-cases, watch-stands, mirror and photograph frames, album covers, ink-stands, paper-cutters, pen racks, envelope boxes, book racks, and walking-sticks. The more artistic creations are generally address boxes, caskets, cabinets, jewel boxes, and writing desks for presentation purposes. Very artistic work is also done in the carving of images and mythological subjects, which are much valued and patronised by the wealthier Hindus and members of the aristocracy, and kept in their houses like sacred pictures. But no worship is made to them, as Hindus only worship idols of stone or metal. A great number of mythological subjects have been

executed for the new palace at Mysore, to fill in niches in screens, and in panels over doorways, &c. Another article worthy of note is the *chamara*, made with a bunch of fine hair-like strips of sandal-wood attached to a highly ornamental handle, and usually waved before the throne of a Máharája on state occasions, or before the image of a Hindu deity when carried in public procession. A gold medal was awarded, at the recent Delhi Art Exhibition, for a magnificent sandal-wood casket ornamented with panels representing hunting scenes.

The sandal-wood carver earns from 12 annas to Rs. 2-4 per diem. At home, when he receives an order for a costly and elaborate piece of work, if not furnished with an advance, he usually spends a few days in the manufacture of stock bazár articles, which procure for him the necessaries of life for the period during which he is occupied over the more laborious task. His earnings are also supplemented by the combs, toys, and other elementary carvings executed by such of his children as show an aptitude for the art and are learning its details. The artisans are ordinarily engaged in work of the coarser kind, which finds ready purchasers in the local market. They sometimes make a varied collection of their work, and take it to Mysore and Bangalore. Some receive advances and commissions for fancy articles from fancy-goods merchants and "artware salesmen" of Madras and Bombay. But the best articles depend on commissions from the Government or municipalities, European residents or visitors. To sum up the industrial aspect of the question, it appears that the producers are few in number, the variety of articles manufactured limited, and the market circumscribed.

The following extract from a note by Colonel C. Bowen, R.E., contains valuable information on the subject:— "In India, as elsewhere, the art instinct of the people first found expression in the decoration of its temples; and, when the instinct grew into the desire for the decoration of dwellings or of articles in ordinary use, the figures, columns, and carvings of the temples were naturally adopted for the purposes, altogether outside of religion. So we find, from the beginning, the sandal-wood carvers followed the models before them on the walls of their shrines. Unfortunately, after the architects and sculptors who elaborated the walls of Belgavi and Halebíd had disappeared, a period of distinct art decadence appears to have set in, and has lasted down to the present day. No original artist arose to treat the subjects of the Hindu Pantheon with entire originality, or to effect improvements on the designs of his predecessors; and the wood-carvers have slavishly adhered to the same original models with the result of establishing in their work a purely conventional style. In every article that we have seen, unless in the few cases when the copy of a European picture or print has been attempted, there is to be found the same ever recurring type of Hindu god or demon, of flower and foliage, of tracery and border. There may be diversity in the arrangement or juxtaposition of each conventional part, but the art impression conveyed on the mind by one carved article, whatever it be, is exactly that conveyed by another.

"In mediæval Christian art we find that pictorial teachings in painting and sculpture were the medium of propagating a knowledge of Christian facts and doctrines, and of profane and romantic history. A traditional way of treating these subjects was adhered to by artists of all kinds, and the same mode of treatment was maintained for centuries. Yet we find that the mediæval artists were not mere slavish copyists, and, though they retained the traditional elements of the subjects and the conventional arrangement of them with curious fidelity, the style of art varied from time to time, and the artist told his story in the art vernacular of his own day. He worked very freely in the details of his picture, translating the customs and architecture, and other accessories into the fashions of his own time. In ancient Greece the same course had obtained, and it produced the greatest artists and the greatest works of art. Between these and eastern art, as embodied at least in Mysore architecture, sculpture and carving, a parallel may be drawn as regards the adoption of traditional subjects and modes of treatment, but the parallel stops abruptly when we come to variety in expression and to modifications or improvements of the original examples. Centuries ago, in Mysore, a few beautiful types were created; for a time perhaps slight variations on these were introduced; but stagnation followed, and artists in stone and wood degenerated rapidly into mere copyists, and copyists pure and simple they have remained to the present day."

The following extracts from Mr. L. Rice's *Mysore Gazetteer* may also be appropriately quoted:—"The designs with which the Gudigars entirely cover the boxes, desks and other articles made, are of an extremely involved and elaborate pattern, consisting for the most part of intricate interlacing foliage and scroll work, completely enveloping medallions containing the representation of some Hindu deity or subject of mythology, and here and there relieved by the introduction of animal forms. The details, though in themselves often highly incongruous, are grouped and blended with a skill that seems to be instinctive in the East, and form an exceedingly rich and appropriate ornamentation, decidedly oriental in style, which leaves not the smallest portion of the surface of the wood untouched. The material is hard, and the minuteness of the work demands the utmost care and patience. Hence the carving of a desk or cabinet involves a labour of many months, and the artists are said to lose their eyesight at a comparatively early age. European designs they imitate to perfection." And again:

"The article of their (the Gudigars') manufacture chiefly in demand are boxes, caskets, and cabinets. These are completely covered with minute and complicated scroll-work, interspersed with figures from the Hindu Pantheon; the general effect of the profuse detail being extremely rich. The carving of Sorab is considered superior to that of Bombay or Canton, and being a very tedious process, requiring great care, is expensive. The Gudigars will imitate admirably any designs that may be furnished them. Boards for album covers, plates from 'Jorrock's Hunt,' and cabinets surrounded with figures have thus been produced for European gentlemen with great success."

It will be apparent from the illustrations alone that the Gudigar, though limited in the range of his subjects, is a true artist in the technique of his art, whether it be in surface carving, *cavo relievo*, *intaglio* or incised work, high relief, or deep under-cutting, in pattern work, scroll, foliage or figurini, and in minutiæ of detail and delicate finish. He is also able to execute from a photograph an image which bears a very fair likeness to the original.

Although much has been done to improve the art by making the Gudigars contribute specimens of their work to exhibitions, thereby enlisting the *amour propre* of the artist, and by paying well for work of special excellence, it appears that much can still be done both for the art and industry. In connection with the construction of the new palace at Mysore, an endeavour is being made to improve their ideas of human proportions and features by means of clay models executed by men trained in the School of Art. The art instinct of the Gudigars at once tells them by comparison where their old and grotesque ideals of face and form are faulty, but the results are not very satisfactory. The characteristic oriental expression is lost, and a better drawn but insipid mask is substituted. It seems possible that, if photographs of Indian home life and scenery were put before them, a great deal more of reality and expression would be imparted to their carvings, apart from the increased range in design. Photographs also of pure Indian design from temples in other parts of Southern India might tend to vary their ornamentation and beautiful scroll-work.

The children of the Gudigars, who are early taught to draw their beautiful scroll-work and designs on a slate, may be educated regularly in free-hand drawing and sketching, and, without departing from the pure oriental style, be made capable of a greater variety and a wider range of subjects in the art.

While the delicacy and costliness of the wood render any extension of its use for industrial purposes impracticable, the same qualities make it peculiarly suitable for the production of works of art. Any improvement, then, in the position of the workmen or their craft will be due to the opening up of new markets for work of the highest artistic value. These would necessarily be sought for in those great cities of Europe and America, where art is highly valued and rewarded. But, if this object is to be attained, Government assistance will be required for some years to come.

Turning now to teak and other wood-carvings, Mysore teak is locally regarded as stronger than, though not so highly developed as the Burma wood, and its superiority in strength is usually attributed to its close grain, and and to the presence of oil in its pores, which is driven out of Burma teak in the process of seasoning. It is also supposed to be better suited for carved work, as it responds better than the Burma wood to the tool of the carver. The best specimens of the ancient teak carvings of Mysore were consumed in the fire of February 1897, which reduced to ashes the frontage and most ornate portion of the old palace, with the valuable relics of the ancient art of Mysore. What can now be seen of the art in Mysore, as in many other towns of Southern India, are *cavo relievo*, or flat patterns on the lintels and sides of doors, and on columns in Hindu houses, and specimens of figurini and scroll-work on Hindu temple cars which are richly carved with *swámis* and grotesque figures. Existing photographs of specimens of ancient carvings illustrate how effective and pleasing wood-carving can be made without the labour involved in the modern intricacy of design, as instanced in the beautiful door-frames and panels which have been recently executed for the new palace in course of erection. In the specimens of the old school, consistent purity of oriental design is noticeable, with all the grotesqueness of features, extravagance of pose, and disproportion of the figure; but the work is full of passionate expression. In the modern specimens of the art, by the native artisans from the Madras School of Arts, and from well-known cabinet-makers and others in Madras, there is a decided improvement in beauty of face, regularity of form, and natural pose of figure, with a distinct insinuation of western style in the scroll, foliage and figurini, suggestive of a European rendering of eastern design.

The Mysore carver, it is satisfactory to note, still shows a decidedly oriental style and taste in his design and work, although he is fast learning from the Madras artisans the more advanced technique and better finish of the latter. The articles ordinarily made in sandal-wood are :—Comb, 4 to 8 annas; toys, 8 annas to Rs.2; images, Rs.3 to Rs.8; book-rack, Rs.30 to Rs.75; paper-cutter, Re.1 to Rs 4; watch-stand, Rs.6 to Rs.50; photograph frame, Rs.50; envelope box, Rs.20; pen-rack, Rs.2 to Rs.10; card-case, Rs.5 to Rs.15; fan, Rs.3 to Rs.15; casket, Rs.250 to Rs.600; walking-stick, Rs.6 to Rs.50. The ordinary rate of carving is 10 annas a square inch.

It is stated by the editor of the *South Canara Manual* that the more well-to-do classes of the Bants occupy

substantial houses on their estates, in many of which there is much fine wood-work, and in some cases the pillars in the porches and verandahs, also the doorways, are elaborately carved. The author of an article in the *Calcutta Review* on the Bants of the Tulunad writes: "The wood-work of their houses is often richly and artistically carved. Canara, with its great mountain forests, yielding an abundance of ivory and a wealth of timbers that readily adapt themselves to the most delicate needs of the carver, was at one time the home of the most deft, skilful and artistic wood-carvers, whose descendants in all probability are the Gudigars, who at the present day are found scattered in Goa, Honavar, Mysore, and some other tracts in south-western India. These hereditary carvers had a *shastram* or science of their own, which, with wonderful exactitude and the keenest botanical knowledge, defined and described the various kinds of wood suitable for rough or delicate carving, the age, season and locality in which these woods ought to be felled, those species which require to be used alone, and those that would answer when used conjointly with other varieties, etc."

At Mudabidure, or Mudbidri, in the ruined palace of the Chautor, or local chief who follows the Jain creed, are some splendid carved wooden pillars, two of which bear representations of the *pâncha-nârîturage* (the horse composed of five women). These are fantastic animals, which are formed by the bodies of a number of shepherdesses for the amusement of their lord Krishna. Writing concerning the Jain temple at Mudbidri, the doors of which are most elaborately carved, Fergusson (*History of Indian Architecture*) states that the architecture of the Jain temples in Tuluva is neither the Dravidian style of the south nor that of Northern India, and indeed is not known to exist anywhere else in India proper, but recurs with all its peculiarities in Nepal. The reverse slopes of the eaves above the verandahs is the feature which specially resembles the style common in Nepal. He describes the exterior of the temples as being much plainer than Hindu temples usually are, and he considers that the sloping roofs of the verandahs are so evidently wooden that the style itself cannot be far removed from a wooden original. In support of this view he mentions that, in many places, on the west coast below the ghauts, the temples are still wholly constructed in wood without any admixture of stone, and almost all the features of the Mudbidri temples may be found in wood at the present day. With regard to the interiors of the temples, he remarks that no two pillars seem alike, and many are ornamented to an extent that may seem almost fantastic, and this again is an indication of their recent descent from a wooden original, as long habit of using stone would have sobered their forms. In this connection Mr. Logan (*Manual of Malabar*) states that the buildings of the kind in Malabar are invariably built of wood in all their characteristic portions, and points out that the style of architecture noted by Fergusson marks out better than anything else the limits of the ancient kingdom of Chéra, for the style prevails all along the west coast country from the limits of Canara to Cape Comorin, having been adopted even for Muhammadan mosques. Typical examples of the style of architecture abundantly met with in Travancore are illustrated from negatives kindly supplied by Mr. Narayana Iyer.

Tirupati wood-carving.—An extensive industry is carried on at Tirupati in the North Arcot district, and the adjacent villages, by men of the carpenter caste, Balijas, Muhammadans, and others. The wood which is most used is red sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), which is obtained from the neighbouring hills and the forests of the Venkatagiri and Kálahasti zamindaris. It cannot, under the Forest Act, be removed from the reserved areas without a license fee. It is sold at Tirupati for Rs.25 to Rs.30 per ton. The wood-carvers say that they cannot get logs of more than a foot in diameter, as logs of larger size are taken by merchants to Madras and other places, for making house-posts. "Large sums are often given for the wood by rich native gentlemen, who take a pride in having their verandah posts prettily carved and ornamented." (Gamble). The majority of the carvers get branches only a few inches in diameter, which are sold at the rate of Re.1 per head-load. Owing to the increase in the price of red sanders wood and the difficulty in procuring it, the carvers are now using a white wood called répalla or pala (*Wrightia tinctoria*) for carving figures.

The industry is an old-established one, and has made considerable progress in recent years both as regards the quantity and quality of the work turned out. A good carver can earn a rupee per diem. Thirty years ago there were only two or three shops at Tirupati where the carvings were sold, whereas, at the present day, there are more than a dozen shops, and in addition, persons from the villages hawk them about the streets. The original model was the figure of Venkateswara-perumal, which is worshipped in the temple on the Tirupati hill. Old specimens show that the artisans did not pay much attention to the back of the figures, but were satisfied with carving the front only. In recent years they have begun to pay more attention to the external anatomy, and to give a better finish to their work, which, though rough, is executed in a bold free style.

Figures of *swámis* (deities), men, mythological animals, elephants, and miniature temple cars with flying cherubs and winged horses, are most abundantly carved; but domestic utensils in the shape of *chembus*, *kinnis*, cups, plates, &c., are turned on the lathe. The largest figures are about twenty inches high, and cost from Rs.12

to Rs.15 per pair. Large vessels are sometimes made of the wood of vépi or áchamaran (*Hardwickia binata*), which resembles red sanders wood, but is more liable to crack. This timber is worked as soon as it is felled, and as it is heavy, men go to the forest and set up a temporary workshop there. The price of vépi is only about Rs.12 per ton, and ordinary purchasers cannot distinguish it from red sanders wood.

The carvers sell their wares to shop-keepers, who advance money to them and supply them with timber. The carved figures are sold to pilgrims and others who visit Tirupati, and are also taken to Conjeeveram, Madura, and other places, at times when important temple festivals are being celebrated. Some petty traders sell their carvings at railway stations, *e.g.* Rénigunta and Arkonam. In recent years some of the carvers have been patronised by the railway employées, who order the most expensive articles to send to friends in various parts of the Presidency and even to Europe.

Tirupati seems to have been a centre where wood-carving for architectural purposes flourished, and even obscure villages bear witness to the fact that the industry was well patronised in bygone days. Old houses, of even comparatively poor people, possess some carvings—on the door-frames, lintel, &c. Quite recently a native gentleman at Tirupati purchased one of the oldest houses in the town, which possessed many carved pillars, architraves, &c. He pulled down the house and constructed a new one, which possessed no carvings, but all the pillars, brackets, &c., were made of plain Burma teak painted blue. The old carvings were thrown away and heaped up in the back-yard. In the construction of houses the lintel of the main doorway is invariably carved, and in the centre there may be a lotus, figure of Lakshmi, Ganésa, or other household god.

Cocoanut carving was introduced into the Cannanore Jail as an industry about 1888. At first Burmese prisoners were set to the work, and in course of time the art was acquired by prisoners of other nationalities, principally the Muhammadan Mappilas of Malabar. Large double cocoanuts (coco-de-mer) are richly carved with Burmese figures and peacocks, and supported on elephants and tigers carved in ebony. Cocoanuts intended for sugar basins, cruet sets, teapots, &c., are engraved in panels bearing richly carved figures of peacocks and Burmese men and women. At Karkhal, in South Canara, young cocoanuts are, in like manner, neatly carved with conventional floral and mythological designs; and in Travancore very spirited and well executed designs are carved in cocoanut shells. Concerning cocoanut carving in Travancore, Mr. Narayana Iyer, Superintendent of the Trivandrum School of Arts, writes as follows:—"The Malayalam proverb, known throughout Malabar, 'to carry a cocoanut shell,' means to beg, this shell being the vessel commonly used by beggars for the receipt of alms. The fruit of the bilva tree (bael: *Ægle Marmelos*) used to be ornamented with elaborate carvings, and mounted with silver and gold, for the purpose of keeping the holy ashes by Sivaites. Such carved fruits are still found in many houses, and are preserved as sacred. The cocoanut appears to have attained its religious importance from an incident in the Padmanabha-swámi temple at Trivandrum, which took place, it is said, nearly 900 years ago. A Namboori Sanyási, by name Vilwamangalathu Swámi, who was greatly revered throughout Malabar, used a half cocoanut shell, in the shape of a cup, for presenting offerings to the deity. This very cup is said to be still used in the temple, mounted in gold and set with precious stones, in honour of the Sanyási. Since the foregoing incident, the cocoanut shell has received the title of Padmanabha-swámi's vessel. The shell must have been originally scraped and polished for domestic and culinary purposes. Ornamentation by carving and piercing are of more recent origin. It is now used for the manufacture of bangles, watch-chains, sticks, and other articles. Small shells are used for carving with various artistic devices. The shell is tough, but requires great care and delicacy in carving, or the fine details are liable to crumble. The colour of the shell when polished is a fine dark brown, which becomes darker with age. The tender shell, which has an ivory hue at first, is sometimes used for carving, but it becomes yellowish after a time."

A modest but interesting industry is carried on at Udayagiri in the Nellore district, concerning which the Rev. F. W. Stait writes as follows:—"In Udayagiri, a village of some note before the days of British rule, there lives an old Muhammadan, who twenty-five years ago used his knife with unusual skill in the manufacture of wooden sandals. As he worked he thought, and from his deliberations a wider sphere opened before him. Why not prepare wooden articles that would increase his income? So he tried his hand on the shapening of spoons and forks, watching for new ideas, and carefully copying any new design that he came in contact with. For years he and his son toiled on, barely making ends meet. But, as his skill increased, his circle of customers grew wider and wider. Dainty boxes in delicate fretwork were carved out of solid blocks. Paper-knives in many designs were prepared. Card trays, the work in which seemed more like fine lace than mere wood-carving, were put upon the market. I interested myself in the work of one who showed such a wonderful natural talent, and through my influence the articles were introduced into several business centres. At the present time Mohammed Ismail Usuff Nanobai and five members of his family are kept constantly at work, and, even with all their efforts, are unable to

meet the demand. The most interesting point in the history of this little industry is the fact that it is all the outcome of personal talent and application, for not only did Naobai carry on the work and design the articles, but he also made his own tools and instruments as the need unfolded itself. He is unable to make the boxes during the hot months, as the wood cracks under the knife."

To Mr. Alfred Chatterton I am indebted for the following note on wood-carving at the Madras School of Arts and Madura Technical Institute.

This institution owes its origin to the disinterested efforts of the late Dr. Alexander Hunter, M.D., who in 1850 established, at his own expense, a school for the promotion and encouragement of industrial arts in the Presidency. The object was to arrest the decay of indigenous arts, and to introduce new industries where the need for such was keenly felt. After a short time the school was taken over by Government, and during the fifty years of its existence as a Government institution, it has done much to achieve the objects for which it was originally founded.

Wood-carving was first started in 1877 in a desultory kind of way, and some years later, a regular wood-carving class was established with one Meenakshi Asári of Ramnád as the maistry (foreman). He was succeeded by his son R. Kalimuthu Asári, who is still in charge of the class, so that the father and son between them are largely responsible for the nature of the influence which this school has had upon wood-carving in the south of India. Although at the outset the class was not very popular, yet, owing to the demand for carved furniture among Europeans being greater than the supply, the pupils of the school were able to obtain good wages, and its popularity, in consequence, soon increased. About the same time, a metal-worker, Ramaswamy Stapathy by name, was also employed in the school to teach repoussé work, in copper and silver, of the type which is largely employed in the ornamentation of the *vahánams* which form such an important feature in all the religious ceremonies connected with the great Dravidian temples of Southern India. This repoussé work is also found on the doors of temples, on the *dwijastambams* or flagstaffs, and on the walls of the innermost shrines, the plates being usually made of copper plated with silver or gold, or, in some instances, of pure silver.

Throughout the whole period of its existence the wood-carving department of the school has been devoted to the ornamentation of European furniture. The frame-work or structure is that of the modern cabinet maker, but the ornamental details are adapted from Dravidian models. Ebony and sandal-wood carving have always been done, to some extent, under the superintendence of native experts in this particular line. But the great bulk of the work done in the school has been in teakwood, and blackwood or "rosewood" (*Dalbergia latifolia*), more particularly the latter. Copper repoussé panels in blackwood frames are an exceedingly effective combination, and have been largely employed in the furniture manufactured by the school during the last fifteen years. It is an unfortunate fact that, of the earlier work done in the school, but few photographs or drawings have been preserved, and all the illustrations are of work done during the last two years, and the majority from the specimens of wood carving specially prepared for the Delhi Durbar Exhibition. The general features of the style of wood-carving are directly copied from the stone temples of Southern India. These latter are almost entirely constructed of crystalline rock, which is obtained from the quarries in large slabs or long pillars by the burning process. Such material lends itself regularly to a type of construction which is still more easily carried out with wood, so that there is nothing incongruous in the reproduction in wood of the stone carvings of Dravidian temples. The origin of this style of architecture is lost in the mists of antiquity, but it is known that at a very early date the principal features had become crystallized in a series of rules for construction, contained in a set of treatises collectively known as the Silpa Sastras. Of these books there were apparently thirty-two principal, and as many subordinate. The majority of these treatises have disappeared; but from such as still remained, Rám Ráz, a native of Tanjore, produced a valuable essay on the architecture of the Hindus, which was published by the Royal Asiatic Society more than seventy years ago. The Hindu orders consist of four principal parts, viz., (1) the *upapitha* or pedestal; (2) the *athisthana* or base; (3) the *sthamba* or pillar; and (4) the *prastara* or entablature. Of pedestals there are three kinds: the first is called Vedi Bhadra, the second Prati Bhadra, and the third Mancha Bhadra. Each of these is again divided into four sorts, making in all twelve, each differing from the other in its formation and in ornamentation. Of bases no less than sixty-four are enumerated in the Manasara, whilst of pillars there are seven kinds, but the entablature of the Indian order admits of but little variation. Hindu architecture reaches its highest flights in the construction of *vimánas* or pyramidal temples, and in *gopurams* or gateways consisting of from one to sixteen storeys, each storey being a complete representation of a Hindu order. Elaborate rules have been framed, regulating the proportions of the various parts. On Plate 56 are given typical sketches of bases, entablatures and pedestals modified to suit wood designs, with the names of the various mouldings. On Plate 57 is a sketch of a *mantapam* showing two pillars of typical designs; also the elevation of a wooden *vimánam*, showing

how readily the stone carving of Southern India lends itself to reproduction in wood. Plate 58 is from photographs of two large sideboards recently constructed at the School of Arts. The lower portion corresponds to the pedestal, the framework upon which it rests being the *upana*, the cupboards the *cantha* or neck, and the mouldings round the sideboard to the *pattica* or *capota*. In large structures it is usual to sub-divide *cantha* into bays by the insertion of pilasters carved into the form of *yális* or rearing horses, and advantage has been taken of this to break up the elevation of the bays to form the cupboards and recesses. The upper part of the sideboard in Plate 58 is derived from a *mantapam* with a flush top, and the lower one is from a *vimána* of a single storey. The main feature of the latter is a central *vimána* with a subsidiary one on either side. The bases of the pillars are relieved with carvings of Ganésha, Natarája, Mahakali and Krishna. The central panel of copper repoussé work represents Subrahmanya on his peacock. In the lower sideboard represented on Plate 58 the figures are Sankara, Narayan, Bráhma, and Parthasarathy. In the central *vimána* Siva, the lord of destruction, rides on his bull in the place of honour, attended on one side by Ganésha astride a bandicoot, and on the other by Subrahmanya mounted on a peacock. In the smaller *vimánas* the presiding deity is Sri Ráma.

As already stated, there are seven orders of pillars, varying from six to twelve diameters in height, from base to capital inclusive. The pillars may be of any shape—circular, square, pentagonal, hexagonal, and so forth. The base is generally square, with sometimes a *kalása* or water-pot. A *nágabandam* surmounts this, and carries the pillar, the middle portion of which has a simple ornament called the *malaikattu* or garland band, or a more ornamental *kalása* with mango leaves and a cocoanut on it. Surmounting the pillar and carrying the entablature is the capital decorated with a series of mouldings similar to those used on the pedestals. In Plate 60 is shown a lampstand in blackwood, which is a fair example of how an article of modern furniture has been derived from the Hindu orders. The lower part with the projecting *yális* corresponds to the entablature, and carries the column which corresponds to the base and pillar, and is surmounted by a small table corresponding to the entablature. In Plate 60 are shown a sideboard and cabinet of European form, but with all the ornamental details derived from Dravidian architecture. In Plate 59 are screens, the framework being of blackwood elaborately carved, and the panels of copper repoussé work.

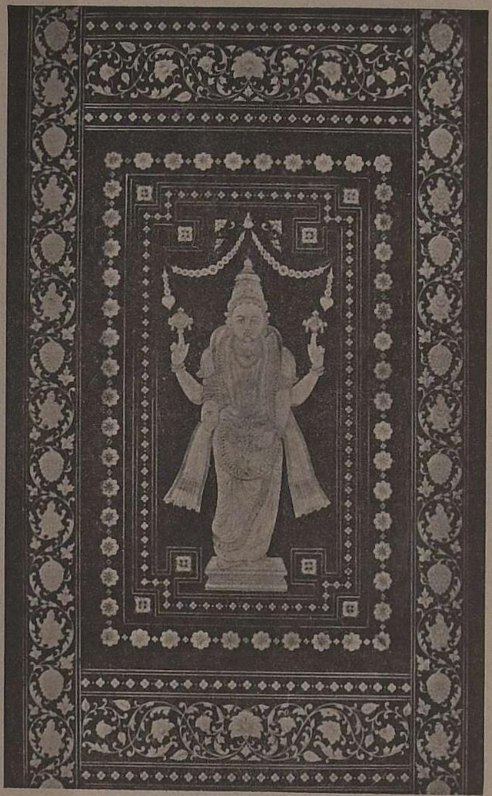
Madura is a noted centre of indigenous art handicraft, which has survived from the days when the town was the chief city of the south of India. Then craftsmen were attracted from far and near, and each brought with him his own peculiar style. In process of time these various styles have become merged into what is now a blend characteristic of the town. This is peculiarly so with the wood-carving, which is celebrated for its boldness of form, due to the influence of the stone-carvers; for its delicate tracery on flat surfaces, probably first introduced by men from the Bombay side; for the fine carving of panels decorated with scenes from the legend of the Máhabaratha; and for the excellent modelling of the *swámis*, which suggests the influence of sandalwood carvers from Mysore and Western India At the present day the best work is done in the Madura Technical School, an institution maintained by the District Board, which has done much to revive decadent art industries, and, by finding new markets for the productions of the skilled art workmen, has encouraged them to maintain the old high standard of work.

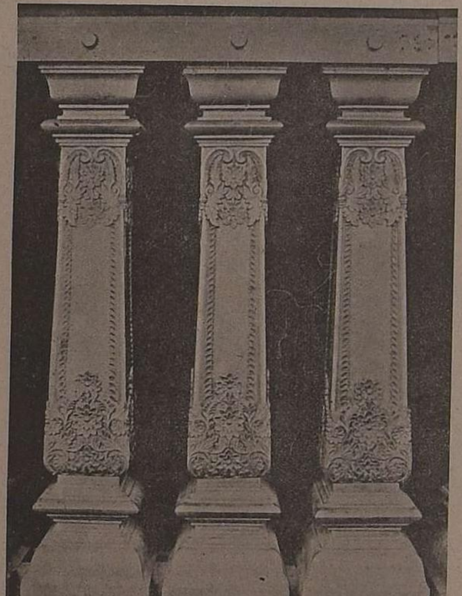
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

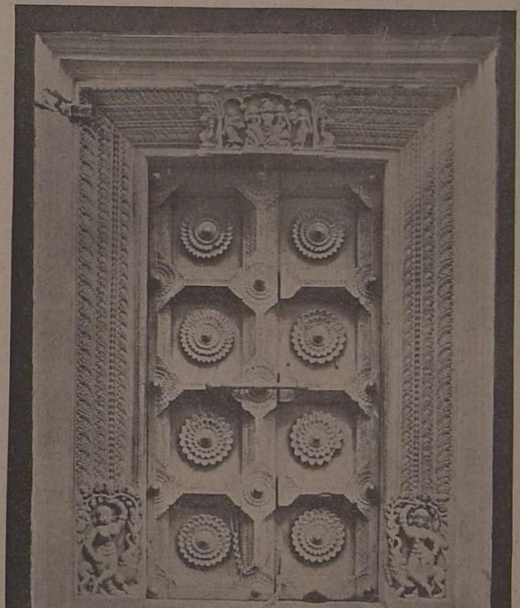
52, 53. Sandal-wood carving. 54. Inlaid door; top of casket; carved pillars and door. 55. Carved panels; Travancore architecture. 56, 57. Types of Hindu carving. 58. Carved sideboards. 59. Panel and wood-carving. 60, 61. Wood-carving, Madras School of Art.

52.—Sandal-wood Carving, Mysore.

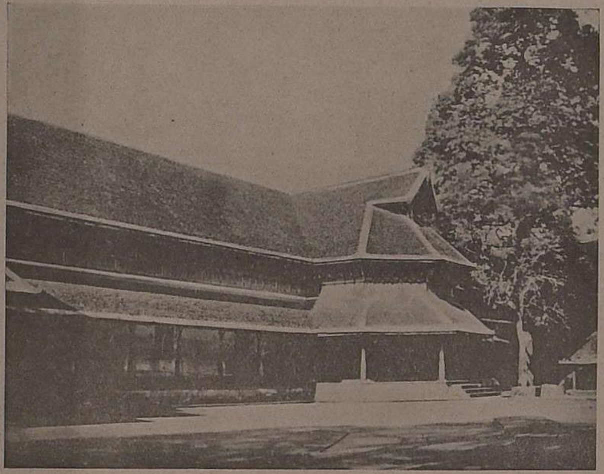
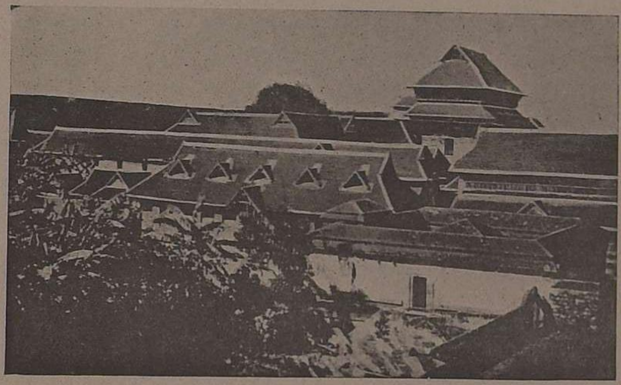
53.—Sandal-wood Carving. Mysore.

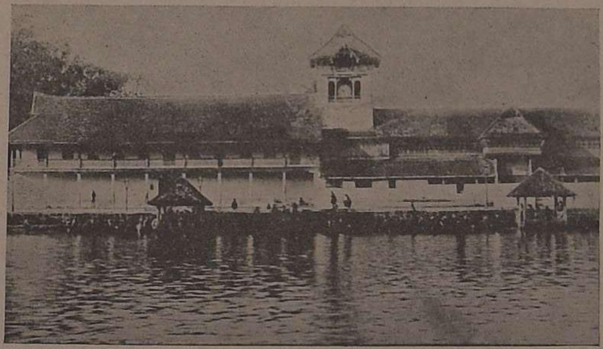




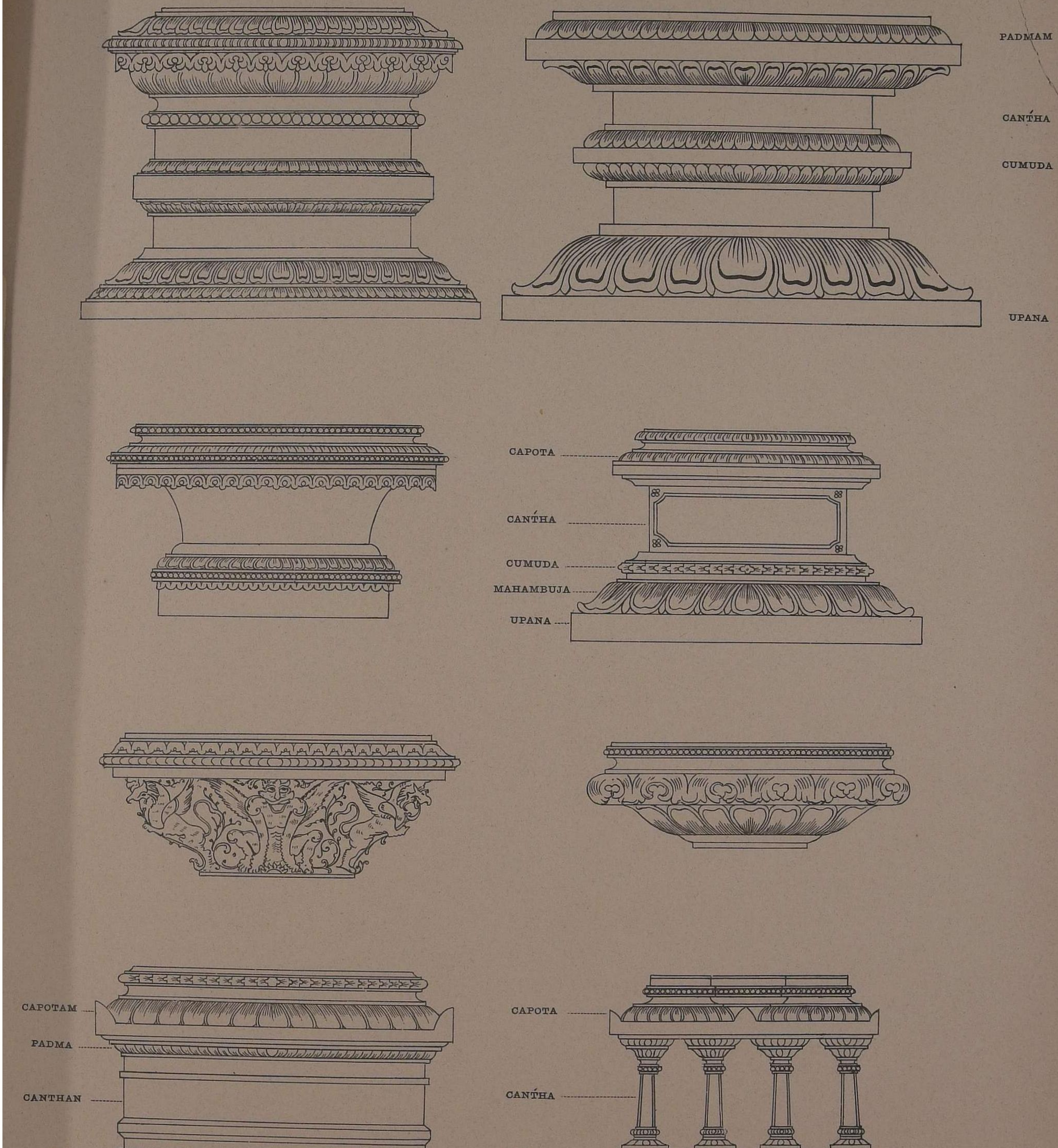


54.—Ivory Inlaid Door and Top of Sandal-wood Casket. Mysore.
Carved Pillars and Door, Mysore Palace.

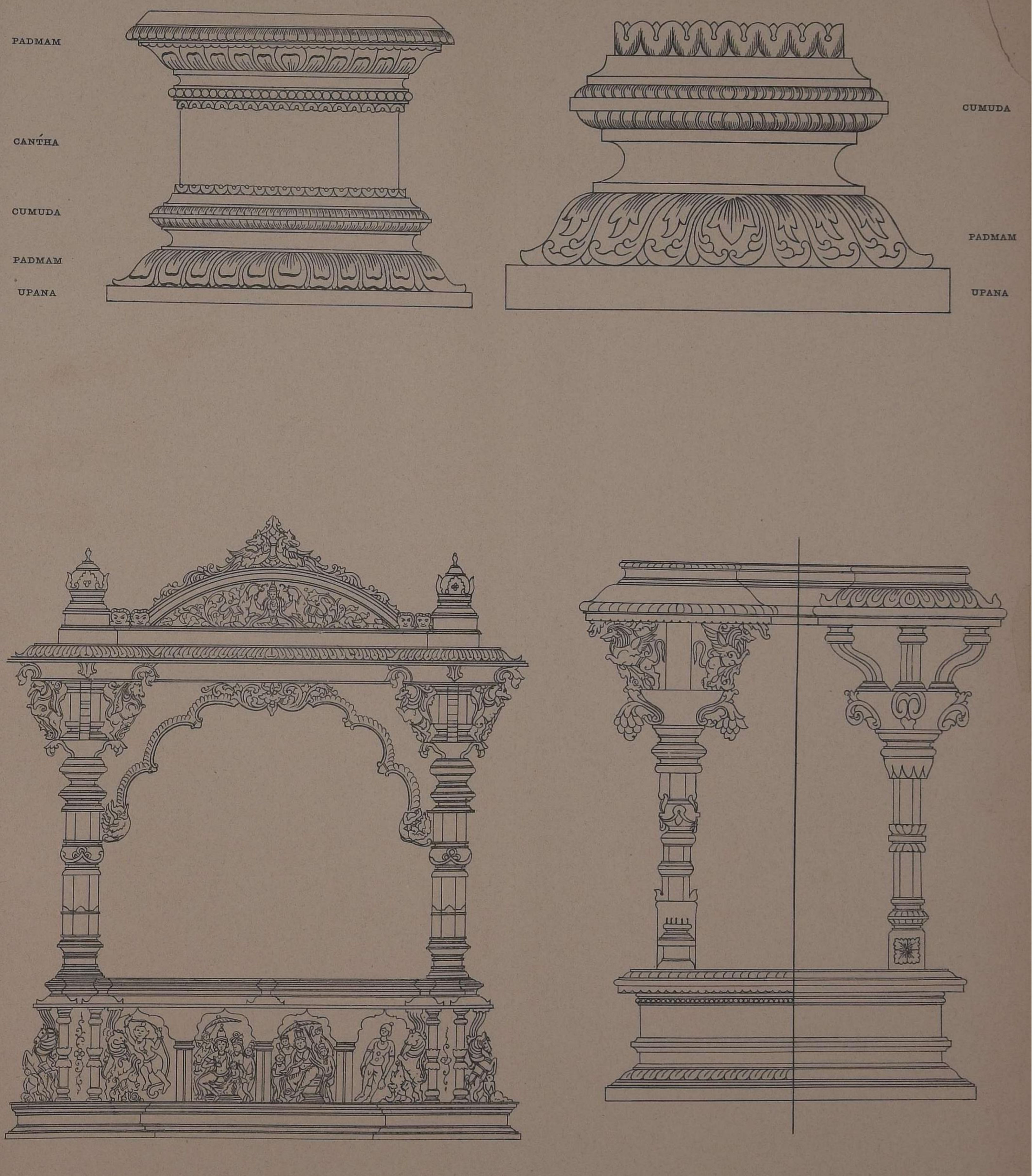





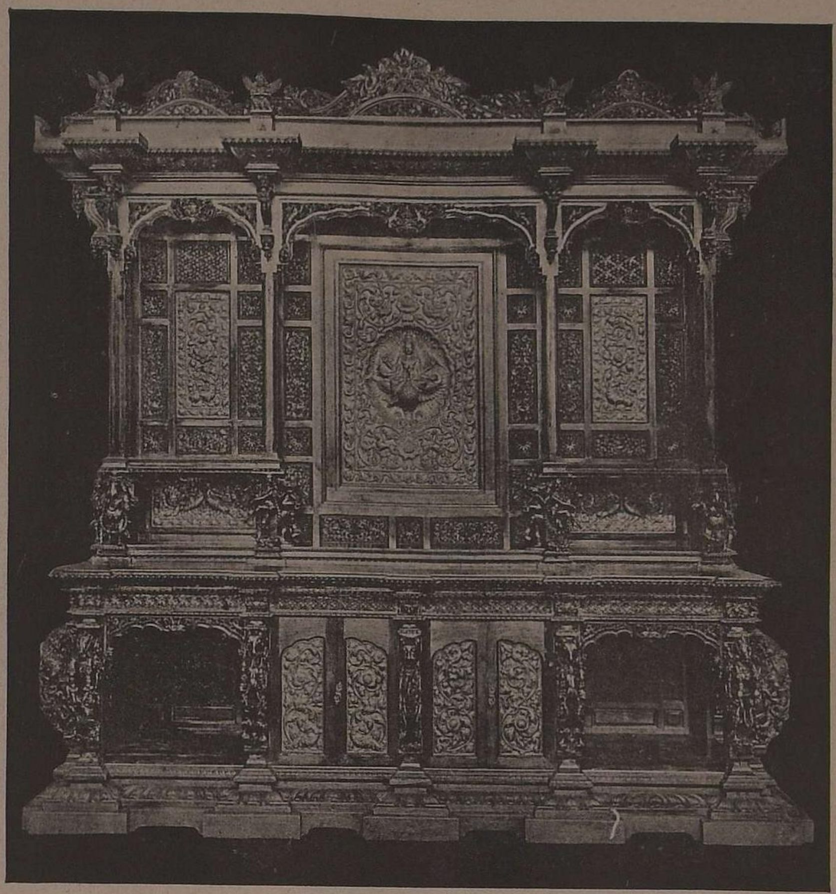
55.—Carved Panels over Doors. Mysore Palace.
Travancore Architecture.



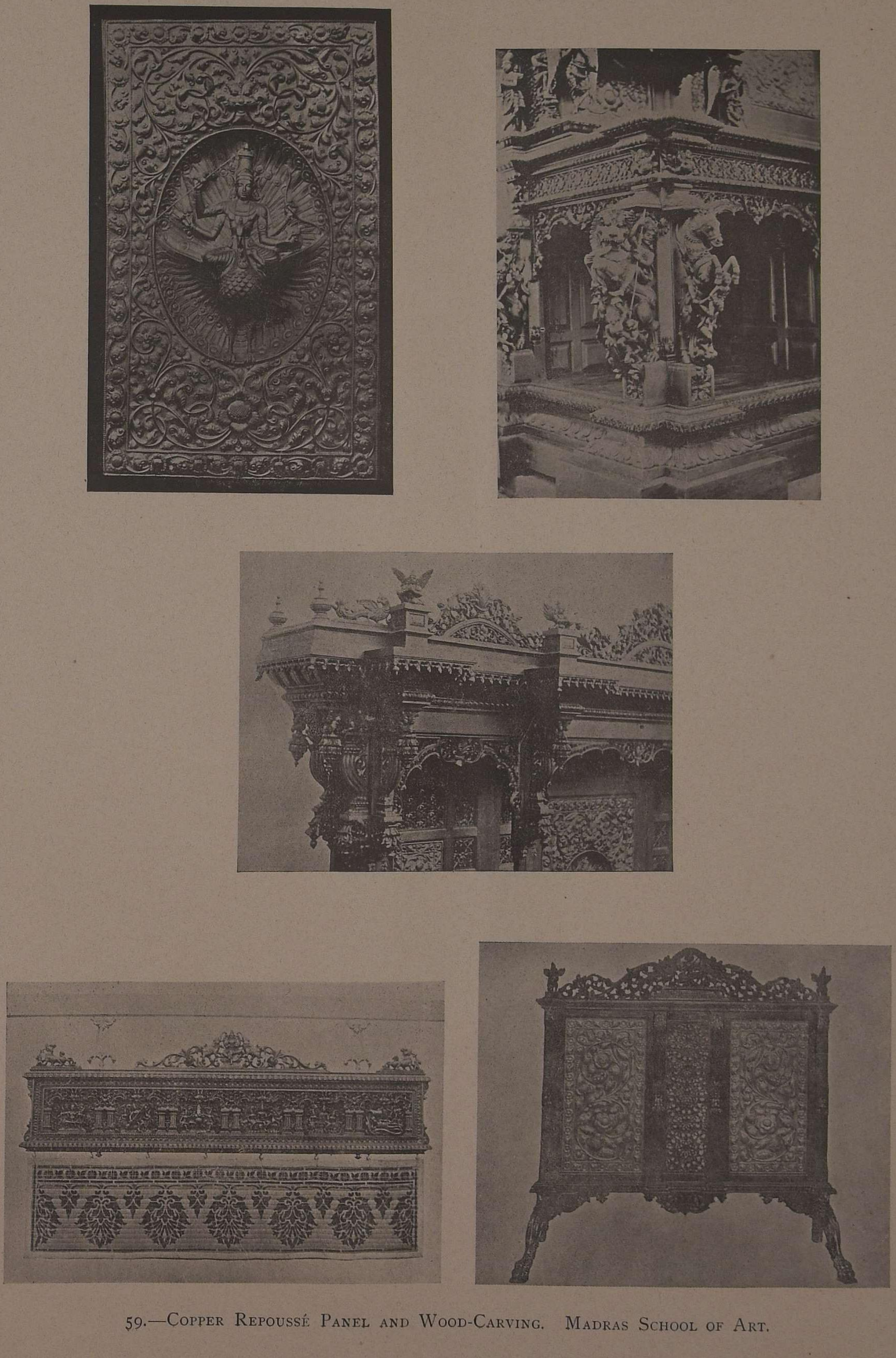
56.—Types of Hindu Carving, Mysore.



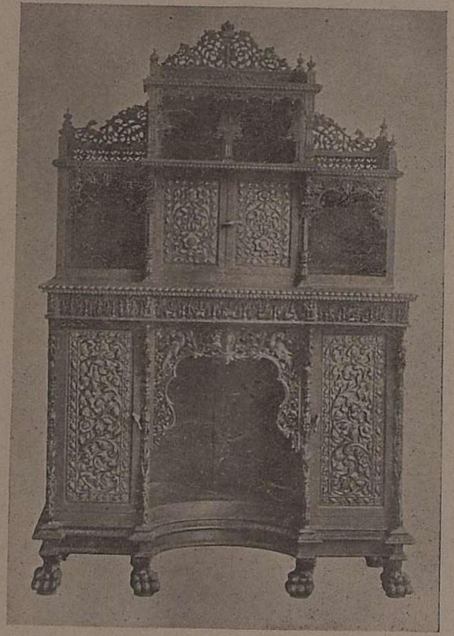
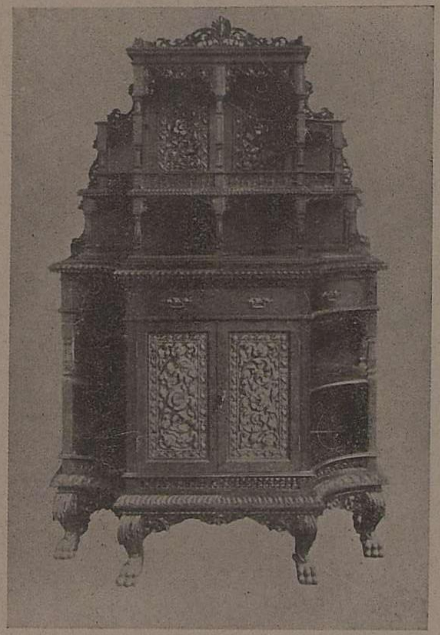
57.—Types of Hindu Carving, Mysore.

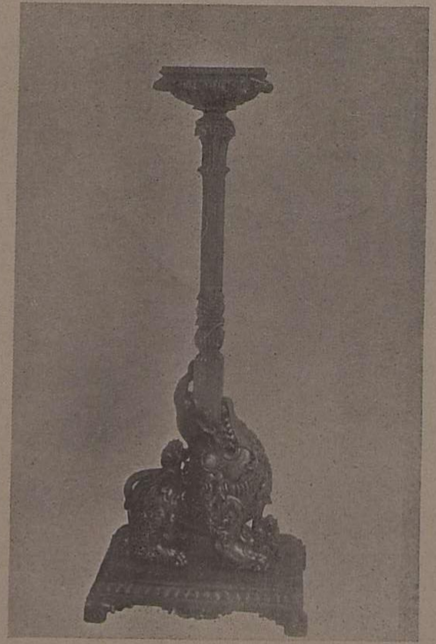
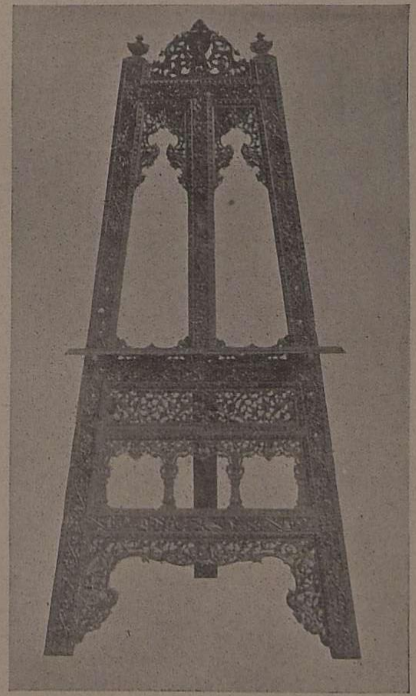


58.—Carved Sideboards, Madras School of Art.

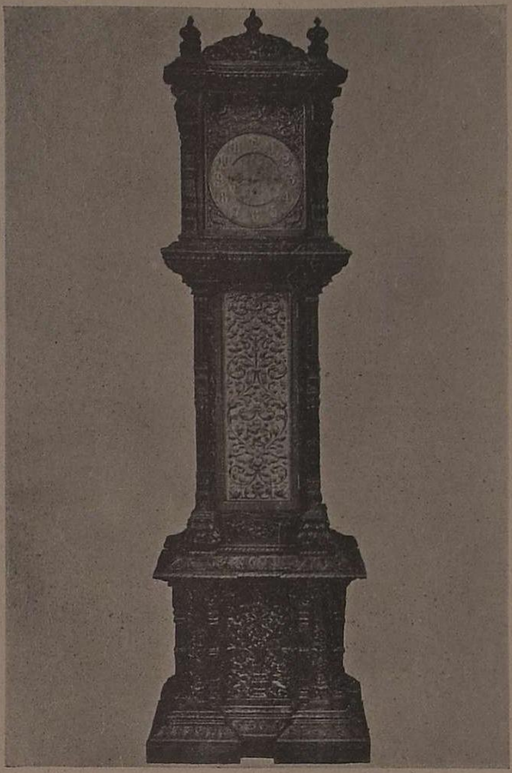


59.—Copper Repoussé Panel and Wood-Carving. Madras School of Art.

60.—Wood-Carving. Madras School of Art.



61.—Wood-Carving. Madras School of Art.

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